DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 117 001 SO 008 832

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TITLE A Strategy to Develop a Concept of Peace as Conflict Resolution.
PUB DATE Nov 75
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (Atlanta, Georgia, November 26-29, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Concept Teaching; *Conflict Resolution; Course Descriptions; Educational Research; Elementary Education; Human Relations; Instructional Innovation; *Peace; Social Behavior; Social Studies; *Teaching Techniques; Values
IDENTIFIERS *Man A Course of Study

ABSTRACT

A teaching strategy designed to help elementary students conceptualize about peace as a process of conflict resolution is described. The Baboon Troop and Netsilik Eskimo materials of "Man: A Course of Study" provide the course content in which the students learn that cooperation is the most important ingredient in group survival. Classroom procedures focus on viewing films, reading booklets about conflict, conflict resolution, and other factors involved in social interaction. Students discuss the materials with peers and with the teacher who acts as a "consultant." The strategy works to the degree that 200 ten-year-olds conceptualized peace as sociable activity, a more abstract level than formerly thought possible. The major importance of using this peace strategy is that the use of high interest materials about foreign peoples beginning at age ten helps students conceptualize about peace at more abstract levels. (Author/DE)

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A STRATEGY TO DEVELOP A CONCEPT OF PEACE AS CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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November 1975

Peace is a concept expounded by world leaders, educators and others concerned with the controlling of violence in the global community, yet few efforts have been instituted relative to defining the prerequisite levels of the concept of peace. Further, little has been done regarding the development of teaching strategies useful in helping students grasp the different levels of peace. To this point, most efforts at peace education have evaluated political and social systems in terms of conflict and violence. These efforts have attempted to develop international level procedures for resolving conflict and violence through the establishment of specialized groups and institutions. While this may be a worthwhile endeavor, educators and social scientists must analyze the components of the concept of peace and begin to develop teaching strategies which are geared to the interest levels of the students.

The teaching strategy being considered has evolved from the analysis of five major questions regarding ten-year-old students and their cognitive abilities regarding conceptualizing about peace. The questions are:

1. What evidence exists that students value peace?
2. What are the common definitional levels of conceptualization about peace expressed by ten-year-old students?
3. Why are ten-year-olds a point of major thrust for expanding and clarifying the concept of peace?

4. If high interest materials are utilized, can students be stimulated to develop a more abstract concept of peace such as conflict resolution?

5. Do materials exist for providing students with necessary information to help them redefine the concept of peace at a higher intellectual level?

Studies concerned with the assessment of student values, including peace, are limited in number. Rokeach, in an unpublished study cited by Becker, asked sixty-nine fifth graders, seventy-five seventh graders, fifty-nine ninth graders, sixty-seven eleventh graders to rank values in order of importance to them as ultimate guiding principles in their lives. Rokeach found that the value, A World at Peace, attained the highest median rank for fifth, seventh, and ninth graders. In the eleventh grade, this value achieved the second highest median rank.[1]

Note, too, that fifth graders were an integral part of the study. The Rokeach study concerned with values important to children is an important factor in developing the hypothesis that peace, i.e., resolving of conflict through nonviolent means can be expanded upon in social studies programs through the use of high interest materials.

An effort to determine the conceptualizations of peace as held by children of different ages and cultures determined four meanings for peace which became the basis for developing a teaching strategy. Cooper, using English and Japanese children,

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[1]James M. Becker, An examination of Objectives, Needs, and Priorities in International Education in U. S. Secondary Schools (Washington, D. E.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 194.

added the dimension of intellectual maturation to the meanings of peace. He ascertained the following as commonly mentioned definitions of peace:

(1) Inactivity, freedom from stimuli, tranquility, relaxation, silence;

(2) Respite and end to hostile activity, a state of no fighting, no war;

(3) Socialble activity, friendship, unity; and

(4) Reconciliation from war, considering the means of avoiding war and sustaining international goodwill.

Cooper concluded that as students exhibited greater abstract reasonsing ability their views toward war and aggression became more negative.[2] If student views became more negative about war and aggression, a "teachable" age should be identified. This finding added emphasis to the search for a strategy which would facilitate the advent of the formal operational stage of learning about peace at an earlier age than had been previously determined by Piagetian research.

Cooper identified differing conceptualizations of peace expressed by English and Japanese students at various age levels. At age fifteen most English children were conceptualizing peace as inactivity, respite or sociable activity. On the other hand, the Japanese students were more concerned with peace as a process of goodwill and reconciliation from war.[3] His findings support the contention that children operate on the concrete

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[2]Peter Cooper, "The Development of the Concept of War," The Journal of Peace Research, II (1965), p. 4.

[3]Cooper, op. cit., p. 9.

reasoning, egocentric stage until about age twelve. In essense, Cooper concluded there was a correlation between the conceptualization of peace delineated and the student's age and intellectual maturation stage. The major thrust of developing a teaching strategy regarding peace evolved from the conclusion expressed by Cooper. The primary purpose of the teaching strategy was to bring about a higher intellectual stage of thinking leading to a more abstract definition of peace in younger children than commonly thought possible. This was to be done with materials which elaborated upon conflict, conflict resolution and other cooperative endeavors of groups.

Alvik, using Norwegian children, ages eight, ten, and twelve. amplified Cooper's research relating age and intellectual maturation stages to conceptualizations of war and peace. He found that the children at age ten were defining peace as inactivity and respite from war. At age twelve students increasingly defined peace as sociable activity.[5]

Rosell's study using eight, eleven, and fourteen year-olds in Sweden was concerned with student concepts about war and peace. He, too, found that children below age fifteen did not frequently mention a concept of peace as conflict resolution. He went further and questioned which factors prevented children from applying their intellectual cognitive structure to conceptualize about peace. Rosell suggested that one barrier to children applying

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[5]Trond Alvik, "The Development of Views of Conflict, War and Peace Among School Schildren," The Journal of Peace Research, V, (1968), 173-183.

their cognitive structure to learning about peace was because expectations put upon them by teachers did not challenge their intellectual capacity.[6]

The decision to work with fifth graders, predominantly ten-year-olds, was predicated upon three factors. The first factor was a large scale study done by Lambert and Klineberg regarding children's views toward foreign people. Their findings indicated that ten-year-olds, when compared with six-year-olds and fourteen-year-olds, were the most inquisitive and friendly toward foreign people and most prone to see others as similar to themselves.[7] In effect, the "teachable moment" for study about foreign peoples occurred when a student reached ten years of age.

A second factor stemmed from the findings of the studies by Cooper, Alvik, and Rosell. As reported, they found that ten-year-olds were able to conceptualize about peace and suggested that work be done to capitalize upon expanding student conceptualizations about peace.

Thirdly, the search for materials which might increase both intellectual growth and a more abstract conceptualization of peace suggested the use of such materials as Man: A Course of Study (MACOS). These materials were seriously considered in light of the proposition forwarded by Becker and Mehlinger. They

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[6]Leif Rosell, "Children's Views of War and Peace," The Journal of Peace Research, V, (1968), 273.

[7]Wallace Lambert and Otto Klineberg, Children's Views of Other Peoples (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1967), p. 217.

posited that a curricular emphasis was needed which was designed to help students understand man qua man by beginning with man-other animal comparisons.[8]

Evidence has been presented that students hold the value, A World of Peace, and are ready to learn about foreign peoples at age ten. Little evidence, however, is available to explain how a specific definition and conceptualization of peace, such as reconciliation, involving non-violent conflict resolution, can be gained by children at an age consistent with their concerns and values.

Man: A Course of Study was chosen as the major vehicle to determine if ten-year-olds can be assisted in attaining a conceptualization of peace as reconciliation, involving non-violent conflict resolution.

Two topics of study in MACOS, the Baboon Troop and the Netsilik Eskimos, were the high interest materials used for introducing and reinforcing the concepts of cooperation, adaptation, social organization patterns, and values and beliefs in a society. This teaching strategy facilitated a basis for developing a conceptualization of peace as conflict resolution in ten-year-olds. The ten-year-old students expressed a more abstract conceptualization of peace than ten-year-olds in the Cooper, Alvik, and Rosell studies.

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[8]James M. Becker and Howard D. Mehlinger, eds., International Diminsions in the Social Studies (Washington, D. C.: The National Council for the Social Studies, 1968), p. iii.

The study of Baboons and Netsilik Eskimos extended the premise stated by Becker and Mehlinger regarding man qua man behaviors. The study of the Netsilik was incorporated to capitalize upon the findings of Lambert and Klineberg that students are most ready to study about peoples unlike themselves at age ten.

In terms of instructional methods, the strategy of having the students actively participate with both peers and the teacher was chosen. This method facilitated the process of question-posing which resulted in children seeking out information, classifying and organizing the data, evaluating the sources, and making inferences and conclusions from the data.

The aforementioned strategy is important because it provides a setting conducive to exploration of ideas through interaction with peers. The teacher is cast in a "consultant" role, providing resource materials and encouraging the students to go beyond the initial data.

As a medium of instruction, six and one-half hours of open-ended, semi-individualized Super 8mm filmloops were utilized. Students looked at the social and behavioral customs of the Baboons and Netsilik Eskimos. Booklets about customs and traditions of the Netsilik were also utilized. Students viewed the filmloops and read the booklets as needed and discussed ways of cooperating and handling conflict when it arose in the Netsilik group. This was also done with the materials devised for studying the Baboon Troop. In both cases, students analyzed data which

revealed that both groups of animals, i.e., man and baboon, protected themselves as a group and provided for each other as a necessary element for survival of the group. In the case of the Baboons, this meant the three or four of the most powerful acted as moderators of the activities of the group. In the Netsilik culture, students discovered that cooperation was the most important ingredient in the survival of the group. If a conflict arose, the Netsilik had devised a sing-song ceremony after which all parties worked together to gather food and provide other group necessities.

When this strategy was utilized with two-hundred students, predominantly ten-year-olds, it was found that they did conceptualize peace at the level of sociable activity which was a marked increase from the administration of a pre-test ten-weeks earlier. In effect this substantiated the supposition made by Alvik that children could conceptualize peace as 'Sociable Activity beginning at age ten.

The major importance of using this teaching strategy about peace is that the use of high interest materials about foreign peoples beginning at age ten can be used to assist students to conceptualize about peace at more abstract levels. These materials can be either teacher developed or commercially prepared. With concentrated efforts, teachers in the intermediate grades might provide materials and activities oriented towards developing more abstract conceptualizations about peace.

In summary, the teaching strategy was oriented toward helping students conceptualize about peace as a process of conflice resolution. The content utilized was from the Baboon Troop and Netsilik Eskimo materials of Man: A Course of Study. Classroom procedure was focused upon viewing films, reading booklets about conflict, conflict resolution and other factors involved in social interaction. Students discussed the materials with peers and with the teacher who acted as a "consultant." The strategy worked to the degree that students conceptualized about peace as sociable activity, a more abstract level than formerly thought possible.

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